



# ***CITY COUNCIL***

## ***Housing, Economic Development and Strategies Committee***

**Monday, April 1, 2013  
5:00 pm  
City Council Office**

**The Housing, Economic Development and Strategies Committee's responsibilities includes Housing Planning strategies, Building Code/Inspection, Economic Development, Citywide Economic Development Programs, Small Businesses, Business Improvement Districts and Enterprise Zones.**

**Committee Members:** Randy Corcoran (Chair), Marcia Goodman Hinnershitz (Vice-Chair) and Jeffrey Waltman

*Although Council committee meetings are open to the public, public comment is not permitted at Council Committee meetings. However, citizens are encouraged to attend and observe the meetings. Comment from citizens or professionals during the meeting may be solicited on agenda topics via invitation by the Committee Chair.*

*All electronic recording devices must be at the entry door in all meeting rooms and offices, as per Bill No. 27-2012*

### **I. Quality of Life Program Consistency**

### **II. Property Maintenance – R. Natale**

1. Update on Amnesty Program

### **III. Update on Zoning Backlog and Start of Hearings – C. Peiffer & D. Kersley**

*Number of letters mailed to properties that will be heard by the hearing master & City Council (See backlog plan attached)*

**IV. CD – L. Agudo**

1. Update on Implementation of Housing & Economic Development Strategy (March)

**V. Discussion re Housing & Economic Development Committee's Legislative Priorities**



# *CITY COUNCIL*

## ***Housing, Economic Development & Strategies Committee***

### **Meeting Report Monday, March 4, 2013**

**Committee Members Attending:** R. Corcoran, Chair; M. Goodman-Hinnershitz; J. Waltman, F. Acosta

**Others Attending:** C. Peiffer, L. Agudo, E. Lloyd, L. Murin, R. Natale, L. Kelleher, B. Rivera

Mr. Corcoran, Chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 5:35 pm.

#### **I. UPDATE ON ZONING BACKLOGS AND START OF HEARINGS**

Mr. Peiffer distributed handouts and explained that there are 2,000 backlog properties that are spread out almost evenly through our city and that letters will be generated to those property owners. He stated that there are approximately 571 hearings to be heard by the hearing officer in high density residential zones. The hearing master will make recommendations that will need to be approved or rejected by Council.

Mr. Waltman stated that he still did not understand the 2,000 figure and how it came about.

Mr. Peiffer explained that the 2,000 were files that could be administratively approved. He stated that these are moving targets, as a result of new housing applications and the certificate of transfer. Occasionally, parcels will have a discrepancy in units or no zoning permit.

Mr. Acosta asked how much the hearing master would cost.

Mr. Peiffer responded that the hearing master receives a fixed fee of \$60,000.

Mr. Acosta asked how much time is this estimated to take.

Mr. Peiffer stated that with the initial 582 parcels mentioned, he projects those to take approximately a year. He would like Council's help with several hearings as he has outlined in his handouts.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she feels the biggest issue in the city is transiency. She also stressed the importance of safety with regard to these situations.

Mr. Corcoran agreed with Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz on the safety issue. He asked if there were any other questions and none were asked.

## **II. PROPERTY MAINTENANCE**

- PM Monthly Report

Mr. Natale stated that they are currently trying to obtain measurements on inspections and in less than three years, their target will be met. He suggested that an adjustment to the time table be made to have this completed in two and a half years instead. He is open to Council feedback on this.

- Certificate of Transfer

Mr. Natale stated that they have enlisted the assistance of Fire when working on commercial properties and that this continues to be a work in progress.

- MDJ Rulings

Mr. Natale stated that this is a difficult matter to report on and suggests that neighbors get into the courtroom to help aid in obtaining improved verdicts.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that a court watcher be designated, perhaps a staff member. She stated that as much documentation as possible is needed and would be helpful.

- Amnesty Report

Mr. Natale noted that it is anticipated to receive the projected amount.

Mr. Agudo wanted to add that the figure given during the budget process has been met and wanted to reiterate that as a positive.

Mr. Acosta stated that he was pleased with that news and agreed with Mr. Agudo that it was worth mentioning again.

### **III. CD UPDATE**

- Microloan Program Loans

Mr. Agudo stated that 13 loans have been approved with two loans outstanding. One of the loans is approximately two payments behind and they are trying to get current.

Mr. Agudo is confident that they should have a strategy going forward. He brought up the possibility of selling our loans to local banks; they would be interested in acquiring these loans as they are in good standing.

Mr. Acosta agreed that this would be a fine idea. He stated that now that we have collateral, this would be an approach in attracting banks. He would not be opposed to this suggestion. He asked if we currently understand the process.

Mr. Agudo responded that the process is not entirely understood but that it is being researched as a possible strategy going forward.

- Implementation of Housing & ED Strategy

Mr. Agudo noted that much progress has been made on this topic with the assistance of Ms. Kelleher. They have clear guidance on how the Eminent Domain process takes place. He stated that testing will be prepared with these acquisition processes to continue progress. He mentioned that the more work we do “in-house”, the less work there is for attorneys to do at a substantial cost which will be a savings for us.

- MVA Status

Mr. Agudo stated that he met with RRA three weeks ago and together they have established priorities for businesses in designated areas. These areas will then be tested and more updates will be given once the outcomes of these tests are determined.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that in the upcoming Council Newsletter, she wrote an article focusing on the importance of neighborhood businesses and is pleased how this ties in with the MVA.

#### **IV. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Mr. Lloyd stated that he placed a call to the DCED to get a better handle on the shelf life of this grant. The goal is to have something in rough draft by the next budgeting cycle around the beginning of Spring.

Mr. Acosta asked who will be leading this effort.

Mr. Lloyd responded that it would have to be a collaborative effort among many departments.

Mr. Agudo agreed with Mr. Lloyd noting that there are many different phases in comprising a Comprehensive Plan and that the assistance of all departments would be required.

Mr. Lloyd noted that all plans ultimately fall under the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Waltman stated that he feels Reading is a great place for opportunity. He mentioned the importance of having a visionary plan; our goals and vision are vital to a successful Comprehensive Plan.

#### **V. SECTION 8 VOUCHERS**

Mr. Lloyd stated that he has put in a request for specific information. He asked council if the inquiry was in reference to properties vs. units?

Mr. Acosta he is not sure and asked if this was on the agenda previously.

Ms. Kelleher responded that it has been on the agenda for a few months.

Mr. Acosta stated he would look into this and obtain clarification on what specifically is asked to be reported on or to possibly take it off the agenda.

#### **VI. OTHER MATTERS**

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz brought up a case where the new homeowner was fined \$1,000 for not registering the property as vacant as he is rehabbing it even though he planned to live in it after renovations were completed. She stated there is an issue with new homeowners not being made aware of how to register a property.

Mr. Acosta stated he, too, had a person go through much the same scenario as Ms.

Goodman-Hinnershitz mentioned. He suggested that awareness to this issue be implemented in some manner going forward.

Mr. Corcoran adjourned the meeting at approximately 6:25pm.

*Respectfully submitted by Bea Rivera, Legislative*

*Aide*

#### **FOLLOW UP ISSUES**

- Plumbing Code Amendment
- Report on disposition of Codes Cases at MDJ Hearings – ongoing
- Request receipt of monthly Codes Report – ongoing
- Review RFPs for Delinquent BPL and other fee/tax collection
- Resolution to fund Micro Loan Enterprise Program – complete
- Housing and Economic Development Strategy update
- End to end review of Housing process – complete
- List of Backlog properties and status - APRIL
- Update on Comprehensive Plan – APRIL
- Review of Section 8 Vouchers and Voucher Program – APRIL
- Status of Implementation of MVA – APRIL
- Update on Housing and QoL Amnesty Program - APRIL

## Suggested break-out of Backlog Hearings

1. **Independent hearing officer** - hearings for properties in the low density residential zones with 1, 2, 3 and 4 units – approximately 571 Hearings (*hearings for properties in R1 and R2 will be referred to Council's conditional use hearings*)
2. **One or two members of Council** (splitting the hearings) hearings for properties with 5 and 6 units – approximately 66 Hearings or 33 per Councilor
3. **Full Council** – hearings for properties with 7 units (including rooms) and above and all properties in R1 and R2 low density zones– approximately 50 Hearings

## Conditions to Qualify for Zoning Administrator Approval Without a Conditional Use Hearing

### **§11-104. Application for Registration and Issuance of a Rental Housing Permit.**

2. *Special provisions for properties with a valid "Housing Permit" issued prior to December 31, 2007 but lacking valid zoning permits for Multiple Dwelling or Rooming House use.*
  - A. *Any property previously registered with the City of Reading Property Maintenance Division and holding a valid "Housing Permit" issued by the Reading Property Maintenance Division prior to December 31, 2007 and has remained current shall be required to apply to the Zoning Administrator for a zoning permit prior to submitting an Application for a Rental Housing Permit. The Zoning Administrator shall make an initial determination as to whether the subject property is located within a zoning district where multi-family rental use is legally permitted as an allowed use or a use previously approved as a Conditional Use pursuant to subsection D of §27-1203 of the Zoning Ordinance, as amended.*
    - (i) *If the Zoning Administrator determines that the subject property is located within a zoning district where multi-family rental use is legally permitted in accordance with the foregoing provisions in Subsection A it will be granted a zoning permit as a legally permitted use under the applicable zoning, subject to subsection B hereunder, and it will be required to comply with all of the provisions of this Chapter and any other applicable chapters as verified upon inspection by the Property Maintenance Division.*



- (ii) If the subject property had a valid Housing Permit as of December 31, 2007 but is determined to be located within a zoning district where multi-family rental use is not legally permitted in accordance with the foregoing provisions in Subsection A it will be granted a zoning permit as a prior "non-conforming use" by the Zoning Administrator within the meaning of subsection B of §27-607 of the Zoning Ordinance and remain eligible for a Rental Housing Permit provided it conforms to the remaining requirements of the City of Reading Codes and Codified Ordinances.*
- B. The Zoning Administrator shall make a secondary determination as to whether the number of dwelling units present exceeds the number of units previously recorded for the premises in City records. A Rental Housing Permit will be denied until the property is modified to comply with the number of units previously recorded.*
- C. A zoning permit issued by the Zoning Administrator in accordance with Sections A and B hereinabove shall satisfy the requirements of §11-104 1.G. and the issuance of a Rental Housing Permit shall be subject to compliance with the remaining provisions of §11-104 1.*